

ANNUAL REPORT

Strengthening the local economy and communities



PEOPLE | PLACES | OPPORTUNITY



About Clutha Development

Strengthening the local economy and communities

Clutha Development is the district's economic development organisation, supporting business growth, attracting investment and people, and promoting the Clutha District through CluthaNZ to strengthen the local economy and communities.

Economic development is about creating the conditions in which businesses, people and communities can thrive.

Businesses create jobs and investment, but their ability to grow is influenced by much more than business activity alone. Workforce availability, housing, infrastructure, skills, community capacity and the attractiveness of the district as a place to live and work all contribute to a strong local economy.

The year in context

During 2025/26, Clutha Development continued to strengthen its proactive engagement with the district's businesses and communities, creating more opportunities to understand first-hand the challenges, opportunities and priorities influencing business growth.

Those conversations provided valuable insight into what was happening on the ground and helped identify shared priorities requiring a wider or coordinated response. Business forums brought businesses together around these issues, with a project group established to help lead, inform and maintain business involvement as actions progressed.

This reflects an evolving role for Clutha Development. Stronger relationships and regular engagement mean we are increasingly able to identify emerging issues and opportunities early, provide guidance and connections, and bring together businesses, Council, government, communities and other partners where a coordinated response is needed.

This has reinforced the importance of looking beyond individual issues to the wider conditions that influence economic growth, and of responding to what is happening today while maintaining a strategic focus on what the district will need in the future.

It all connects

Economic development is about creating the conditions for communities, businesses and people to thrive.

Strong communities support people to live and belong, people provide the workforce businesses need, thriving businesses create jobs and investment, and greater awareness of Clutha attracts visitors, people and opportunity.

Clutha Development works across this connected system; engaging, enabling, coordinating and promoting - to help overcome barriers, connect opportunities and strengthen the district's ability to respond to change and build for the future.

Economic Development

When people, places and opportunity connect, Clutha thrives.



ENGAGE
Listen and build relationships



ENABLE
Help overcome barriers



COORDINATE
Bring people and opportunities together



PROMOTE
Showcase Clutha and its opportunities

A STRONGER CLUTHA DISTRICT TOGETHER

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Enabling thriving communities and local economies

Connected communities are stronger communities

Thriving communities are an important part of a strong local economy. They help create places where people want to live, participate, work and belong.

Our role is often not to own or deliver community projects ourselves. Instead, we help communities access services and information, connect people and organisations, coordinate activity and provide practical support that helps locally led ideas move forward.

During 2025/26 this ranged from providing access to government and support services through Heartland Services, to facilitating locally led projects, volunteering initiatives, youth employment activity and community-led housing solutions.

Heartland Services - bringing services closer to communities

Access to essential services can be more difficult when people live some distance from larger centres.

Through Heartland Services, Clutha Development provides a local connection point where people can access information and support relating to government and community services.

During the year, Heartland Services supported 687 enquiries, helping connect people with the services and information they needed. We continued to operate as a community connection point, with an average of 27 organisations and groups each quarter and 1,852 attendees using the facility.

The value is not just in the number of enquiries or people through the door. Providing accessible local connections helps reduce barriers to services while creating a place where community organisations, support providers and residents can connect.

Enabling communities to progress what matters locally

Community development is rarely one project or one organisation. Clutha Development works alongside communities, organisations and partners to help connect ideas with the information, people and support needed to progress them.

Community projects

Helping locally led projects move from ideas to action through planning, business case development, research and information, promotional material, facilitation, and connections to relevant expertise, organisations and resources.

Volunteering and participation

Continue development and support for the volunteer network, promoting opportunities for people to participate and contribute, including development of the Student Volunteering Booklet, and celebrating our volunteers as part of national volunteer week.



(Clutha District Volunteer Facebook page)

Youth and employment

Helping ensure Clutha benefits from opportunities that support young people and employment by connecting community organisations, government agencies and Council, identifying and helping unlock funding, and enabling initiatives aligned with the Living and Working in Clutha strategy to progress.

Housing and community solutions

Supporting community-led housing initiatives through information, facilitation and connections, including the land and house package and support for the establishment of a community housing trust.



(September 2025: Visit by Southland councils, Habitat for Humanity and Community Trust Southland to learn more about our housing initiatives)

Communities are better connected to services, information and opportunities, while locally led initiatives receive the coordination and practical support needed to progress. This strengthens community participation and resilience and helps connect local needs with wider district opportunities.

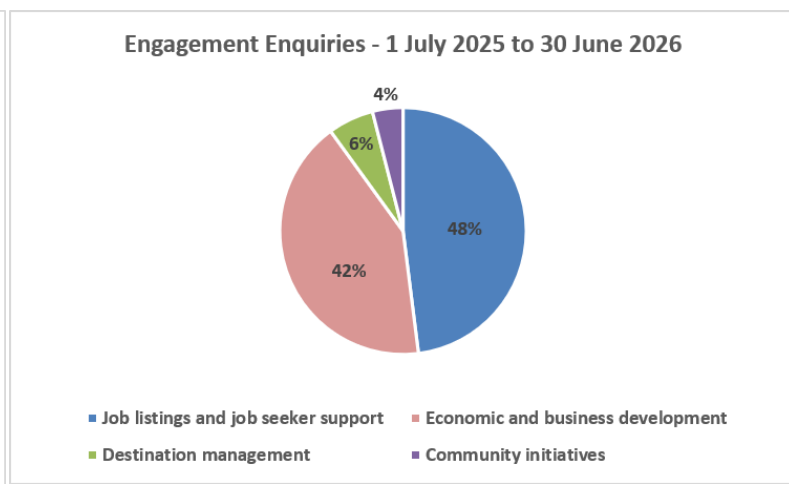
Empowering workforce and business growth

From understanding business needs to building solutions

Strong businesses are fundamental to a strong local economy. Our role is to understand what businesses need to operate, grow and adapt, and to connect them with the people, information, expertise and opportunities that can help.

Throughout 2025/26, a proactive programme of business engagement strengthened our understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing businesses across the district.

986 business engagements were recorded during the year, with 826 directly aligned with workforce and business growth.



These relationships provide more than a measure of activity. They give Clutha Development insight into what is happening on the ground, helping identify common barriers, emerging opportunities and issues where a coordinated response can add value.

Business forums provided a further opportunity to bring businesses together around shared issues. From those discussions, priority areas were identified around workforce attraction; workforce retention and community connection; housing as an economic enabler; and education, training and workforce pathways.

The resulting project group provides an ongoing business connection as these priorities move from discussion into action.



Turning business insight into action

Regular engagement helps Clutha Development identify where individual business issues are part of a wider district challenge - and where bringing businesses and other partners together may help unlock a solution.

During 2025/26, this approach included a new initiative in partnership with Council, 'Ask a Planner' sessions. It provides earlier access to regulatory guidance, and ongoing one-to-one business support, referrals and connections.

Housing as an economic enabler

Workforce discussions highlighted that attracting people to jobs is only part of the challenge. Businesses also identified workforce retention, community connection and access to housing as important factors affecting their ability to recruit and retain people.

This led to further work around worker accommodation, including engagement with businesses, property and investment interests and potential solutions.

This is a good example of Clutha Development's role evolving from identifying a business issue to helping coordinate a wider response. The issue may begin with workforce demand, but addressing it can require connections across business, housing, investment, communities and local government.

Building the workforce pipeline – Connecting people with opportunity

Businesses need people now, but building a sustainable workforce also means helping people understand the careers and opportunities available within the district.



(2025 Clutha District Training and Development Awards: Celebrating success and investment in the workforce)

Clutha Development works across both ends of the workforce challenge - supporting immediate recruitment while strengthening longer-term connections between businesses, education and future employees.

The workforce pathway

Businesses tell us what skills and people they need.



Vacancies and Job Seekers

- 504 new jobs were listed during the year, with 1,006 listings including repeat months.
- CluthaDistrictFarmJobsNZ also provided a direct rural employment channel, with 4,167 members, 102 vacancy posts and 84 job-seeker posts.



Career Awareness

- The Clutha Careers Expo connected around 550 attendees with more than 55 exhibitors, showcasing local career, training and employment opportunities.



Business and Education Connections

- Career Compass grew to 15 participating businesses, creating opportunities for young people to better understand local workplaces and career pathways.
- Two students progressed into Gateway placements through participating Career Compass businesses - an early example of awareness and connection translating into a practical workforce outcome.

Businesses are better connected to potential employees and workforce pathways, while young people have greater visibility of the careers and opportunities available locally.



(Clutha Careers Expo 2025)

Supporting businesses to grow and adapt

Not every business need requires a district-wide response. Much of Clutha Development's economic development role happens through individual conversations, helping businesses access information, expertise, networks and opportunities at the point they need them.

During the year, support included:

- One-to-one business advice and referrals
- Entrepreneurship and microgrant support
- Agri-business development
- Training and capability connections
- Business collaboration
- Tourism operator and product development.

Businesses are better connected to the people, information, expertise and opportunities they need to operate, grow and adapt. Workforce initiatives address both immediate recruitment needs and longer-term workforce development, while sustained business engagement provides the intelligence needed to identify barriers and develop coordinated responses.

Attracting people and investment

Attracting people and investment starts with how Clutha is seen and experienced.

Through CluthaNZ, destination development, promotion and partnerships, Clutha Development builds awareness of the district as a place to visit, live, work, establish a business and invest.

Destination management is therefore about more than attracting visitors. A visitor may discover Clutha through a holiday or experience, return again, consider employment or lifestyle opportunities, establish connections with local businesses, or ultimately choose to live or invest here.

Discover → Visit → Experience → Connect → Live • Work • Invest

During 2025/26, the refreshed CluthaNZ brand, integrated campaigns, destination development, visitor experiences and regional partnerships continued to strengthen Clutha's visibility and reach.

More than 209,000 visits were recorded across our three monitored sites (Nugget Point, Waiholā Boardwalk and Gabriel's Gully), while growth in digital audiences and participation in wider partnerships extended Clutha's reach beyond our own channels.

CluthaNZ Stay for Good

What if the person who discovers Clutha as a visitor could also see themselves living, working or building a future here? Clutha Stay for Good brings these audiences together.

Rather than promoting visitor experiences in isolation, the campaign showcases Clutha's lifestyle, businesses, communities and opportunities alongside the places and experiences that encourage people to visit.

The objective is broader economic connection - building awareness of the Clutha District as a destination for visitors, a home for skilled people and a place where businesses and investment can thrive.

This integrated approach is supported by the refreshed CluthaNZ identity, destination storytelling, social and digital channels, visitor information, imagery and content development, and engagement with businesses and communities across the district.



Extending CluthaNZ's reach

Southern Way - collaboration creates greater reach

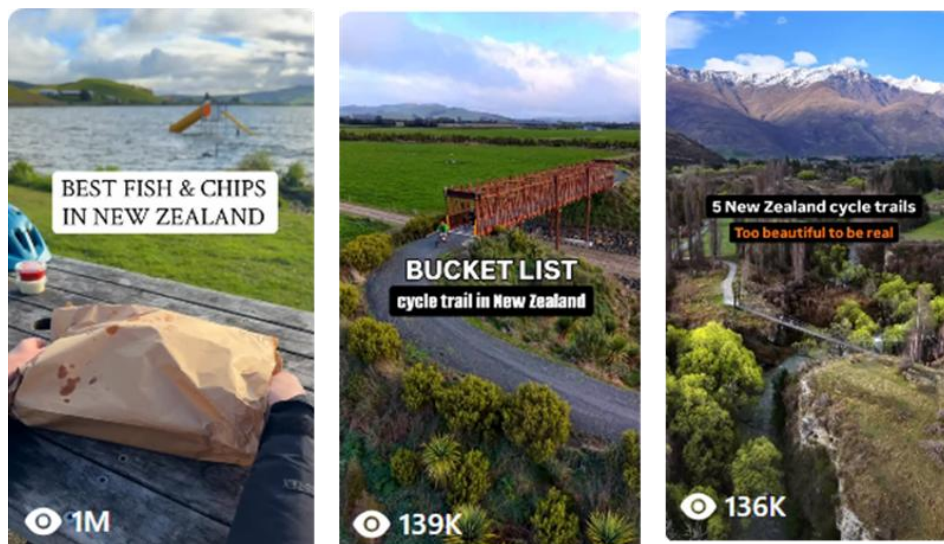
Working with regional partners enables Clutha to reach audiences and markets that would be difficult to access alone.

Through Southern Way, Clutha has been positioned alongside neighbouring destinations in domestic and international marketing, travel trade and media activity.

During the year, this collaboration generated across the Southern Way region: 53,000 new Australian users – 61 trade flights – 406 seat sales. Alongside travel-trade familiarisations, media coverage and relationships with travel partners.

The value for Clutha extends beyond visitor numbers. Greater market visibility creates opportunities to encourage visitors to explore more of the district, stay longer and spend with local businesses, while increasing awareness of Clutha among people who may return for other reasons.

Otago Cycle Trail Collaborative – regional marketing collaborative and partnership with Great Rides and Heartland Trails across Otago



Turning awareness into connection

Promotion creates awareness, but the experience people have once they discover Clutha matters too.

Destination development during the year continued to strengthen visitor experiences and encourage greater exploration of the district through initiatives including heritage experiences, Storymapp®, visitor signage and interpretation, the Clutha Gold Cycle Trail, The Catlins and development of trade-ready experiences.

Alongside visitor attraction, CluthaNZ increasingly tells the wider story of the district - its lifestyle, businesses, employment opportunities and communities - helping people see Clutha not only as somewhere to visit, but somewhere they could belong.

Investment and business opportunities form another part of that pathway, with Clutha Development helping connect potential investors, businesses and strategic opportunities where appropriate.

Clutha has greater visibility and stronger positioning as a place to visit, live, work and invest. Integrated destination management, storytelling, digital promotion, trade relationships and product development increase awareness of the district and create pathways for visitors, workers, residents, businesses and investors to engage more deeply with Clutha.



Future Clutha

Looking ahead, not just responding to today

A strong local economy needs the ability to anticipate change as well as respond to immediate needs.

Clutha Development provides economic insight, monitors emerging issues and opportunities, and connects businesses, communities and decision-makers with information that can help inform future decisions.

During 2025/26 this included quarterly economic monitoring and Infometrics analysis, Business Confidence Surveys, economic and policy monitoring, resilience planning, Electrify Clutha event, agritourism development and regional economic development collaboration.

Our future focus is built around understanding what is happening now, preparing for what may change, and identifying opportunities that can strengthen the district's economy and communities over the longer term.

Insight

Economic monitoring, business confidence and direct engagement help build a clearer picture of what is happening across the district.

Preparedness

Resilience planning and monitoring emerging risks help businesses and communities consider how they can better prepare for disruption and change.

Opportunity

Exploring new technologies, diversification, investment and regional opportunities helps position Clutha to respond when opportunities emerge.

Businesses, communities and decision-makers are better equipped to anticipate and respond to change. Economic intelligence, resilience planning and exploration of emerging opportunities provide a stronger evidence base for decisions and help position Clutha to adapt, diversify and take advantage of future opportunities.

Responding today. Preparing for tomorrow.

The wind event last year exposed practical vulnerabilities across Clutha communities and highlighted the importance of local preparedness and connection.

In response, Clutha Development together with Council began developing a district community resilience framework and engaged with the Department of Internal Affairs around opportunities to support locally led resilience planning.

The focus is on working with communities to better understand their own risks, strengths and priorities and to support locally appropriate approaches to preparedness and resilience.

Exploring future opportunity – Electrify Clutha

Electrify Clutha brought people together to explore how electrification, new technology and changing energy systems could support resilience, productivity and future economic opportunity.

The discussion has helped identify areas for further exploration, including energy resilience, productivity and potential district-specific opportunities.



(Source: Infometrics – Overview of the Clutha District – Year to June 2026)

Diversification

Agritourism work explored opportunities for landowners to diversify income and strengthen business resilience while also creating new reasons for people to visit Clutha.



(Agritourism Regional Network, Otago/Southland)



(Electrify Clutha event)

Working Together

Clutha Development's work is made possible through strong relationships across our district and beyond.

We acknowledge the contribution and governance of our Board members, whose knowledge, oversight and commitment support the direction of Clutha Development.

We thank the Clutha District Council for its ongoing partnership and investment in economic and destination development, and the Ministry of Social Development for its support of Heartland Services, enabling local access to government and community services.

We also acknowledge our members, whose continued involvement and support are an important part of Clutha Development.

Across the year, we have worked alongside businesses, community organisations, government agencies, regional partners and many individuals who have contributed their knowledge, time and expertise. The strength of these relationships enables us to connect opportunities, respond to challenges and progress work that no single organisation can achieve alone.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge the Clutha Development team. Their commitment, knowledge of our district, flexibility, adaptability and collective strengths enable us to work across businesses, communities, partners and projects, responding to the diverse needs and opportunities of our district.

Looking Ahead

The work of economic development is never finished. The opportunities and challenges facing businesses, communities and the district will continue to evolve, and so will Clutha Development's role in responding to them.

The relationships and insight strengthened during 2025/26 provide a strong foundation for the year ahead. Our focus will remain on listening to what is happening across the district, responding to emerging needs and opportunities, and bringing together the people, information and resources that can help move opportunities forward.

We will continue to support businesses and workforce development, strengthen Clutha's ability to attract people and investment, promote the district through CluthaNZ, support connected and resilient communities, and maintain a strategic focus on the opportunities and challenges that will shape the Clutha District's future.

Our role is both current and long term, responding to what is happening today and helping position the Clutha District for what comes next.

Thank you to everyone who has worked alongside us during 2025/26.

Linda Moore
Chief Executive
Clutha Development Incorporated
13 October 2026